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# The Beast to the East: Norway's Russia-Policy After Crimea - Status Quo or a Shift in Policy?

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**LIU POST**

# **The Beast to the East:**

**Norway's Russia-Policy After Crimea - Status Quo or a Shift in  
Policy?**

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE IN CANDIDACY FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

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**16 May 2018**

Amy Freedman, Ph.D

Jeremy Buchman, Ph.D

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## Abstract

This research examines Norway's Russia-policy following the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the aggression in East Ukraine. The research identifies attributes of Norway's Russia-policy before and after Crimea and applies realist and liberal international relations theory to the discussion on whether Norway's policy doctrine has changed. The main conclusion is that there has been a shift in Norway's Russia-policy in the aftermath of Crimea from a liberal approach to realist foreign policy doctrine, but that Norway retain some emphasis on preserving normalized bilateral relations and cooperation.

## Preface

The Russian annexation of Crimea and continued destabilization of Eastern Ukraine shocked the world and established a new security order in Europe. The shocking landgrab reversed the growing optimism in the western narrative of Russia becoming a more reliable partner and slowly but surely aligning themselves with western norms and values. Supposedly, the notion of Russian super power ambitions was starting to fade. Those assumptions turned out to be dramatically wrong. Observers says we should have seen it coming and that the Russo-Georgia war in 2008 was not only a one-time incident, but instead a clear warning sign. As a student of international relations and international politics, I naturally found this interesting from an academic and professional point of view, and I have therefore monitored the developments ever since.

I conduct this research as a Norwegian citizen with family roots in the northern part of Norway, not too far away from the Russian border. I grew up relatively close to one of Norway's northernmost military airfield bases, where a large part of Norway's fleet of combat fighter jets and other military equipment is stationed. 27 May last year, the same base was the target for at Russian military exercise including nine fighter jets in which they conducted an expedition simulating attacks on critical military infrastructure. The exercise was a response to a Norwegian-led military exercise with allies in near proximity of Russia, according to Morten Haga Lunde, head of the Norwegian Intelligence Service (Johnsen, 2018). However, the abovementioned exercise was not an isolated event. Numerous instances of Russian military activity in Norwegian airspace has been logged over the years. The frequency remains the same, but the complexity and level of sophistication is at a higher level since Crimea. Yet, the Norwegian Intelligence Service and state leaders remains steadfast in their opinion that Russia

does not project a clear military threat to Norway. I have consciously attempted, successfully or not, to draft this research with the aim to discuss Norway's Russia-policy after Crimea in an objective manner, without bashing our neighbor to the East.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Roughly four years has passed since the Ukrainian people rallied at Independent Square in Kiev to demonstrate their distrust and anger towards former President Victor Yanukovich and his cabinet. The protests occurred shortly after President Yanukovich's cabinet chose to abandon a trade agreement with the European Union (EU), which would have brought Ukraine closer to the West. In a last-minute turnaround, President Yanukovich opted to look east and seek closer co-operation with President Vladimir Putin and his Russia. On 18 March 2014, following three months of violent conflicts in Ukraine and on the Crimean Peninsula, Russian and Crimean leaders signed a deal in Moscow, formalizing the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. A shocking land grab, which the world has not seen since Saddam Hussain annexed Kuwait in 1990. Russia has continued to destabilize Eastern-Ukraine after the annexation of Crimea, with the support and deployment of “little green men” or soldiers without insignia if you like. Russia has not respected and upheld cease fire-agreements and the situation remains tense. As a result, we have a security scenario in Europe that has changed for the worse and Russia has lost most of its trust from the international community, which along with Norway, condemns Russia's aggression in Ukraine.

*“We are faced with a different Russia. I want to warn against the fact that some people see this as something that is going to pass. The situation has changed, and it has changed profoundly”* (Søreide, 2015). These words from, at the time Norwegian Defense Minister and now newly appointed Foreign Minister, Ine Søreide Eriksen, serves as the starting point of this research. Søreide Eriksen refers to a security scenario in Europe that has changed for the worse following the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in early 2014 and the further aggressions that followed in Eastern Ukraine. Not since WWII tore Europe asunder, and saw

Germany annex country after country, have we seen a European state annex territory from another state by use of military force. This fact speaks to the severity of the situation.

The quote above is retrieved from a televised interview with Søreide Eriksen on CNN International 28 February 2015. It was the sincerity and degree of seriousness in the former Defense Minister's message, and the assertiveness of her tone as she delivered the message, that ultimately led to the drafting of this research. There was no room for doubt in her message: I) We are faced with a different Russia, II) it is not going to pass, and III), the situation has changed profoundly. The message raises several questions. What does a changed security scenario in Europe and a different Russia mean for Norway who shares a border with Russia in the High North? How has Norway responded to the Russian actions in Ukraine? Do we see a significant shift in Norway's Russia-policy from before and after Crimea? If so, is that shift surprising or predictable from an international relations theory perspective? These questions make the core of this thesis.

The previous section has set the stage for this research. Moving forward, this research inquires further into Norway's Russia-policy after the changed security scenario in Europe after Russia's actions in Ukraine and the context described above. Roughly four years has passed since Crimea. Four years is a time span long enough to identify potential changes or trends in policy of a more fixed nature - rather than arbitrary - nature. This thesis argues that there has been a shift in Norway's foreign policy doctrine towards Russia in the aftermath of Crimea from a neoliberal approach to a realist approach. The research's main hypothesis is therefore:

*Norway's Russia-policy has since the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula shifted from a liberal approach to a more realist foreign policy doctrine.*



There are several reasons why this is an interesting research subject. One is Norway and Russia's asymmetrical relationship in terms of real power. One is a small power state, some may argue a medium power state in some areas, and the other a great power state with super power ambitions. One state relies on protection and cooperation through NATO and deterrence from the nuclear umbrella of the United States of America (the U.S.), and the other has the largest nuclear capabilities in the world and a massive military that is being relentlessly modernized and expanded as we speak. While the Russian annexation never was a direct attack on Norway, it remains indisputable that it was an attack on the set of values and international norms that Norway thrives under, as well as the values that Norway strives to promote and protect. One can therefore say that the Russian annexation of Crimea was an indirect attack, or a direct *threat*, towards the set of liberal values and norms Norway abides to. By outlining Norway's response to the what happened in Crimea, this research can tell us something about how a small state responds or react to aggression from a great power state towards a third-party state. Furthermore, we are to a large extent able to define status quo in Norway-Russia relations, which can be useful for future research.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

In order to study Norway's foreign policy response to Russia's actions in Ukraine and to identify changes in Norway's Russia-policy after Crimea, it is important to provide a historical context to understand the nature of Norway-Russia relations prior to Crimea. A chapter is therefore devoted to highlighting the *modus operandi* and nature of Norway's Russia-policy prior

the Russian annexation of Crimea. This is done to highlight the comparative nature of the hypothesis of this research.

Moving on, the thesis will outline observations in Norway's Russia-policy after the Russia's annexation of Crimea and a changed security scenario in Europe. By doing so, the thesis illustrates that there has been a shift in Norway's Russia-policy. These observations in Norway's policy are divided into three categories or policy areas: defense and security posture, economic relations and bilateral relations. The intention is to cover a broad range of relevant policy areas. Finally, these observations are analyzed and explained through the lens of international relations (IR) theory before reaching a conclusion. In order to discuss this case through the lens of IR theory, it is also necessary to explain and outline the relevant IR theories applied in this thesis. Therefore, a chapter is devoted to the theoretical framework of this research.

Before moving on to the chapter highlighting Norway's Russia-policy after Crimea, this section covering the thesis' methodology provides an explanation of research design, as well as definitions of relevant terms and concepts necessary to understand the scope of the thesis. This includes defining two dimensions of Norway's Russia-policy, that is 1) the bilateral dimension and 2) the NATO dimension, as well as a definition of the "High North" which is a term used frequently throughout the thesis. This section also includes a literature review of existing relevant research on the subject.

A conclusion summarizes the major findings in the analysis and looks at the path ahead.

## Research Design

This thesis applies qualitative research method, as a qualitative research design is better suited to answer the research questions in this research. Quantifying changes in the two dimensions of Norway relations to Russia would be a daunting task, and furthermore it would be challenging to include changes in rhetoric and policies. The research is based on a document study, which is a type of qualitative data collection. The ultimate purpose of a document study is to arrive at an understanding of the meaning and significance of what the documents contains – both in a literal and in an interpretative sense (Christensen et al, 2013, Pp 139; Scott, 1990, Pp 28). A large number of speeches delivered by - and interviews of - Norwegian government officials, official government documents, white papers, journal articles, scholarly work from research institutions, and newspaper articles from the time of the Russian aggressions started up to recently, serves as the data for the document analysis. The thesis analyzes the collected data, and test rhetoric, statements and policies of the Norwegian government against the hypotheses of the thesis.

## Definitions of terms and concepts

### Defining the bilateral dimension and the NATO dimension

One can argue that Norway's Russia-policy has two key dimensions. One dimension defined by Norway's geographical position as Russia's neighbor, and one dimension defined by Norway's membership in NATO and allegiance to Russia's idea of the West (Støre, 2008). Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jonas Gahr Støre, launched this idea in a foreign policy speech at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) in 2008. This thesis borrows and elaborate Støre's concept of two dimensions in Norway-Russia relations, and applies the

dimensions in the context of the abovementioned events in the Ukraine and the thesis' research question.

It is constructive to apply the two dimensions in this inquiry because they illustrate two different approaches to Norway's Russia-policy, which is complex and demands a balancing act of contradicting interests. Because the two dimensions are in fact somewhat contradicting, but not necessarily in a deconstructive manner. On one side, Norway wants a solid and well-functioning relationship with Russia, based on pragmatic cooperation in areas of mutual- and strategic interest, especially in the High North (Brende, 2016). On the contrary, the Norwegian Government is committed to NATO and does not hesitate to criticize and stand up to Russian violations of International Law and disregard for human rights. Balancing the two dimensions is therefore a crucial task in Norway's Russia-relations. Definitions of the two dimensions, which this thesis title 1) *the NATO dimension* and 2) *the bilateral dimension*, follows in the next paragraph.

The *NATO dimension*, as applied in this thesis, covers Norway's NATO-membership as a deterrent to Russia and Norway's security and defense policy.

The *bilateral dimension*, as applied in this thesis, covers Norway's bilateral engagement with Russia, hereunder bilateral treaties- and cooperation, trade and commerce, political- and diplomatic contact.

### Defining the "High North"

What is "the High North"? Why is it necessary to explain the term in the context of this thesis? Odd Gunnar Skagestad provides perhaps the best academic piece on this subject. In his article "The High North – An Elastic Concept in Norwegian Arctic Policy" (2010), Skagestad thoroughly outlines in a historical context how the concept has developed, how it has been used

and its role in Norwegian politics. The High North is the English equivalent to the Norwegian term “nordområdene”. The literal translation of “nordområdene”, however, is “the northern areas”, but this translation does not serve much purpose. According to Skagestad (2010), this translation would need additional context-defining elements (the northern areas of what, where or in relation to what?), and would therefore cause more havoc than clarity.

Former Foreign Affairs Minister, Knut Frydenlund was the first to use the term “nordområdene” in his foreign policy report to the Norwegian Parliament 1 November 1974. At the time, the term referred to a vaguely defined stretch of land and sea territories in the Arctic and the Sub-Arctic to the north of the Norwegian mainland, including the Svalbard archipelago (Skagestad, 2010). Thereafter, the term picked up momentum and saw frequent use in academic work and in political contexts as well.

The English equivalent, however, is a newer addition to the vocabulary of Norwegian Government officials and scholars. Norwegian diplomat, Sverre Jervell, was the first to take use of the term “High North” in his book *“The Military Build Up in the High North”*, published in 1986 (Skagestad, 2010). Yet, he did not offer a precise definition. The term “the High North” caught on in the following two decades, and as of 2003, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) chose it as the official English translation for the Norwegian word “nordområdene”. The MFA underwent an internal restructuring at the time, and they included “nordområdene” in one of their sections. Consequently, the MFA had to come up with an appropriate translation in English, and the High North was their choice for pragmatic reasons such as availability (Skagestad, 2010). Three years later in 2006, the Norwegian Government published its High North Strategy, which included a definition of the term “High North” developed specifically to serve the purpose of the Strategy. It goes as follows:

*“The High North is a broad concept both geographically and politically. In geographical terms, it covers the sea and land, including islands and archipelagos, stretching from northwards from the southern boundary in Nordland County in Norway and eastwards from the Greenland Sea to the Barents Sea and the Pechora Sea. In political terms, it includes the administrative entities in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia that are part of the Barents Cooperation. Furthermore, Norway’s High North Policy overlaps with the Nordic Cooperation, our relations with the US and Canada through the Arctic Council, and our relations with the EU through the Northern Dimension”.*

It is noteworthy that the Norwegian Government in 2009, in a follow-up document to the High North Strategy, completely change their tone and acknowledged that “We do not have any precise definition of “The High North” in the Norwegian public discourse” (Skagestad, 2010). Furthermore, Skagestad (2010) underlines in his article that the official documents and reports he covers all seem to lack a precise definition, which boils down to the complexity of the term “The High North”. The High North is a dynamic concept that changes meaning over the course of time, and furthermore, its content changes depending both on who applies and the context. Pragmatically, the term can serve as geographical delamination because it does have a geographical aspect. However, it is primarily a political concept (Skagestad, 2010). According to Skagestad (2010), “The High North” is “a concept which pertains to Norway’s northern land and island territories, sea areas, adjacent areas and neighboring areas, insofar as these territories or areas capture the focus of the public attention and are highlighted as political priority areas”. This brings us to the second initial question in this section. Why is the High North important in the context of this thesis?

There is no doubt concerning the High North's strategic and political importance for the Norwegian Government, and in that regard so is relations with Russia. In other words, the High North as a policy area is the core of Norway-Russia relations. This becomes apparent in numerous Government reports and strategies since 2003, when the High North truly gained momentum in the political discourse in Norway and became a new dimension in Norwegian foreign policy. In December 2006, the Norwegian Government launched their first High North Strategy. The Strategy highlights taking advantage of the opportunities in the High North as one of the most important priorities for the Norwegian Government for the years to come (Norwegian Government, 2006). The Strategy also states that "our [Norway's] relations with Russia form the central bilateral dimension of Norway's High North Policy". (Norwegian Government, 2006). Furthermore, former Foreign Affairs Minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, pointed out in 2008 that "the High North is the most important strategic area of the Norwegian Government's foreign policy", and that "Norway-Russia relation is key in Norway's High North Strategy and foreign policy in general" (Støre, 2008). These are only a few out of many examples that highlights the significance of the High North as a policy area in regard to Norway's Russia-policy.

It is not, however, the intention of this thesis to elaborate and give too much attention to the "High North" as a concept. Skagestad (2010) provides a brilliant overview of the subject in his article "*Where is the 'High North'? - The High North - an elastic concept?*" which is cited in this thesis. The purpose of including this section is to underscore the importance of the High North concerning Norway-Russia relations and Norway's Russia-policy, the latter being the focal point of this thesis. As will become even more apparent as this thesis develop, is the significant role the High North as a policy area play in Norway's current Russia-policy.

Providing some clarification of the term “High North” is therefore necessary as this thesis uses it frequently. While a precise definition of the term “High North” still lacks at this point, this section has, to some extent, brought to attention the complexity of the term and highlighted how the term has developed over time. Read *Where is the "High North"? - The High North - an elastic concept?* (Skagestad, 2010) for a more in-depth analysis of the term “High North”.

## Literature Review

A literature review did not uncover much research on the somewhat specific nature of this inquiry, which is not surprising taking into consideration the fact that the events in Crimea occurred a relatively recently (roughly four years ago today). If you look at four years in an isolated manner it may seem like a long time, but to implement policy takes time and it takes even longer observe if these policies represent a significant change in direction.

Bragstad (2016) studied Norway’s balancing policies (deterrence and reassurance) towards Russia in the period after 2008 and thereby overlaps with the inquiry of this thesis. By analyzing policy documents and speeches in a qualitative approach, Bragstad (2016) found that Norway throughout the period emphasizes both deterrence and reassurance in its policies, and that one could not conclude that Norway favored deterrence at the expense of reassurance. But there is, however, a tendency to emphasize deterrence both in ambitions and practice, and that the emphasis on reassurance is somewhat reduced. Bragstad (2016) conclusion is that there is no evidence that Norway is disregarding its balancing policy towards Russia.

Blakar (2016, p. 3) studied the effect of the “Crimean-crisis” on cooperation in the Barents Sea. The study found that the events in Crimea to a small degree affected Norway-



Russia relations and cooperation in the Barents Sea, and that the cooperation remained normal in a worsened period of time of Norway-Russia relations (Blakar, 2016, p. 3)

## Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this research is not only to identify potential changes in Norway's Russia-policy, but to connect the abstract world of theory and political realities by making sense of the dynamics at work. In this case, the dynamics at work is the changed security scenario in Europe following Russia's annexation of Crimea and destabilization of East Ukraine, and how the Norwegian government and their policy makers has responded. Theory can help us make sense of - and understand - complex dynamics in play on the international stage, as well as predict, or fail to predict, how states and policy makers respond or react to these dynamics. It is not the purpose of this research to outline in depth - and provide a wide discussion on - the many interesting aspects and nuances of IR theory. But in order to test IR theories' ability to predict and explain Norway's response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and destabilization of East Ukraine, it is necessary to understand a sufficient scope of the lenses we are applying to study this specific case.

The IR discipline contains several different theories and paradigms, which all offer valid explanations and points of view about international politics and the dynamics at work on the international arena. Different IR theories are able to explain global events, behaviors and patterns. While the theories are based on different dogmas and offers both different and often contradicting explanations, it is important to underline that one theory does not trump the other in terms of validity. On the contrary, the wide array of theories allows for an enriched discussion and more ways of understanding and explaining dynamics on the international arena, one theory

may explain one event better than another, and one theory might allow us to make better predictions about state behavior than another.

While reiterating the fact that the IR discipline includes several theories and paradigms, one may still argue that there are two main paradigms in IR: realism and liberalism. Walt (1998), however, operates with three paradigms by adding constructivism to the mix. While states are the main unit of analysis in both realism and liberalism, constructivism apply individuals and especially élites as the main unit of analysis. As states (predominately Norway, but also Russia) are the units for the analysis in this thesis it makes more sense to devote most attention to liberalism and realism. However, constructivism is useful in explaining Norway's perception of a threat from Russia as social norms and their impact on state behavior are central to constructivist IR theory, and useful in explaining what kind of behavior Norway wants to see from Russia as well. Hoffmann (2010) explains that social norms were conceptualized as aspects of social structure that emerged from the actions and beliefs of actors in specific communities, and that norms shaped those actions and beliefs by constituting actors' identities and interests (Hoffman, 2010). This research has already pointed that Norway's foreign policy and international engagement has been heavily shaped by liberal norms and values such as respect for International Law and human rights, democracy, freedom of press, political transparency and engagement in multilateralism. These norms and ideals are typically shared by the west (Western-European states, the US and NATO-members). Hoffman (2010) explain that ideas about whether actors reason about norms or through norms can be linked to behavioral logics, which provide conceptions of how norms and actors are linked. And furthermore, that shared ideas about appropriate state behavior has a significant impact on the nature and functioning of world politics (Hoffmann, 2010). The Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 was a breach of

International Law and hence a direct attack on the liberal norms shared by Norway and the west. Norway's policy response to Russia can therefore potentially also be viewed as a reaction to Russia's violation of these norms. While Norway does not consider Russia to pose a direct military threat despite military build-up and modernization, the perception of a direct threat to western common norms and values are still highly relevant. Ideally, Norway would want to see that Russia, to a respectable degree, adhere to the same norms and values as Norway and the west. A general observation was that Russia, from the end of the Cold War, was leaving its super power ambitions behind and becoming increasingly intertwined with the west. Whether it is possible for Russia to fully share western norms and ideals, taking in consideration its history, domestic political situation and political leadership, is another interesting question but not one for this thesis. The following paragraphs will highlight important elements in realism and liberalism and explain their relevance for this research.

The realist school of thought contains a dogma arguing that states, dominated by self-interest, pursue – and compete for – power. Power is the ultimate currency of international politics, according to Mearsheimer (2010), and economic and military capabilities constitute the main instruments of power. Realism was the dominant theoretical tradition during the Cold War (Walt, 1998). This was partly due to the fact that it provided a straight-forward and meaningful explanation for war, the American-Soviet arms race, alliances and the pessimistic view on the prospects of war and conflict (Walt, 1998). Hans Morgenthau is perhaps the main proponent of what is known as classic realism. Morgenthau, and other classic realists, argue that it is in within a states' nature, like with human beings, to dominate others and pursue power (Mearsheimer, 2010).

However, the realist school continued to evolve, and from it grew neorealist theories or structural realism. This will be the term used in this thesis. The basic difference between structural realism and classical realism encompass the question of why states pursue power. As explained above, the classic realists' narrative is that states, and mainly great power states, pursue power because it is within human nature - and hence a states' and state leaders' nature - to do so. For structural realist, human nature has little to do with why states pursue power. Instead, it is the structure and architecture of the international system that forces a state to pursue power (Mearsheimer, 2010). It involves a zero-sum game in terms of power, formed by the international system, which does not include a higher authority to control great-power states or prohibit from them from going to war against each other. Therefore, they are forced to seek power in terms of mainly economic and military capabilities. But how much power is enough?

According to Mearsheimer (2010), the answer to how much power is enough creates a divide within structural realism. An offensive structural realist (Mearsheimer) argues that a state must pursue as much power as possible and to pursue hegemony. Lack of information concerning other great powers' intentions and the self-help nature of the international system serving as the main argument. A defensive structural realist (Waltz) argue that it is unwise for a great power to pursue too much power, as the international system eventually will punish them, and other great powers will try to outbalance power.

It is reasonable to assume that the Russian annexation of Crimea was a Russian attempt to pursue power regardless of motives, and there are two contradicting narratives on why this occurred. The west's (Western European states, NATO and the US) narrative argues that Russia has super power ambitions and pursues power in order to dominate the international arena. The Russian narrative argues that the expansion of NATO and the EU into states in Russia's

neighborhood forced and entitled Russia to take assertive actions in order to protect national strategic interests such as maintaining open sea lines of communication for the Russian navy in based in Sevastopol in Crimea. Defensive structural realism would argue that was both unwise of the west to expand its sphere of influence into Russia's close vicinity and for Russia to annex Crimea as it would present a threat to either party. So, what does realism predict that states or actors do when there is a change in dynamics or a perception of a threat? They balance out the power against the dominant threat. In realism, military and economic capabilities constitute the main instruments of power as previously mentioned. Ways for states to balance power could typically be to increase its military capabilities by investing, strengthening and reassuring military alliances, upping deterrence measures and more.

Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane are the main proponents behind complex interdependence theory. In their book *Power and Interdependence*, Keohane & Nye (2012) explain that complex interdependence theory has three main characteristics: 1) there are multiple actors on the world stage, and they communicate through multiple channels, which they call interstate, trans-governmental and transnational relations; 2) there is an absence of hierarchy among issues in international relations, meaning that military security is not the dominant issue like in realism; and 3) Soft power and diplomacy trumps the use of military force because of the interdependence between the actors. Great powers, states, multilateral organizations, and international organizations all influence the process of decision-making. Furthermore, complex interdependence theory argues that the world is economically intertwined and that peaceful resolutions outweighs war because of that.

As outlined in the chapters above, the *modus operandi* in Norway's foreign policy doctrine towards Russia has since the end of the Cold War been dominated by bilateral

cooperation in areas of mutual interest, engagement in multilateral organizations such as the Arctic Council and then Barents Euro-Arctic Council, and a desire to have a close and productive relationship. These elements check the boxes of characteristics in Keohane and Nye's complex interdependence theory outlined above. So, what type of behavior from states does complex interdependence predict when confronted with the threat of Russian expansion of power? We know that complex interdependence theory predicts states to prefer soft power and diplomacy over military measures as the cost of a potential war is too big. States would therefore turn to reassurance measures, confidence-building and diplomacy either bilateral or through international organizations.

## Chapter 4: Norway-Russia Relations Before Crimea

Formal bilateral relations between Norway and Russia (Norway - Soviet Union relations up to 1991) trace back to 1905, four years after the dissolution of the union between Norway and Sweden. The dissolution of the union ensured full autonomy over government affairs for Norway, including foreign policy, which Sweden conducted during the time of the union. Norway was among the first states to pursue bilateral relations with Russia after dissolution of the Soviet Union. This may be a natural consequence of the two countries being neighbor states, but it highlights the long-lasting bond of the two states. However, the people of Norway and Russia were intertwined even before bilateral relations were formalized. Norwegians and Russians engaged in the so called "Pomor"-trade, which can be traced back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Informal trade routes were established in the High North, and Russian merchants sailed to Norway to trade goods for fish. This long-lasting tradition fostered a strong people-to-people bond in the High North, which exists to this day. After bilateral relations were formalized 1905,

Norway has consciously defined a pragmatic foreign policy approach towards Russia, and the nature of Norway-Russia relations has been productive and positive.

April 2014 marked the 70-year anniversary of the liberation of Finnmark in the northernmost part of Norway after several years of German occupation during World War II. After three years of intense combats between German and Soviet troops on the Soviet side of the Norwegian-Soviet border, the Red Army launched a heavy counter-offensive 7 October 1944. The same day, Adolf Hitler himself decided to withdraw their roughly 200.000 soldiers, 20 000 military vehicles, 60 000 horses and many war prisoners. The withdrawal was ruthless and saw German troops burn entire villages to the ground to make sure nothing was left behind for the Soviet troops racing after. 18 October the Red Army marched into Norway without consent from the Norwegian government, and thereby raising both questions and serious concern about their intentions. From there on the Red Army continued to force German troops out of Norway, city after city starting with Kirkenes, which was a milestone. In the late stage of the German retreat, Norway deployed 3,000 soldiers to the region along with the Soviet troops still present. According to Colonel Arne Dahl, in charge of the 3,000 soldiers, the Norwegian-Soviet cooperation was flawless (Skancke / University of Oslo). However, there was still a concern within the interim Norwegian administration about a scenario where Soviet troops was given order to stay put in Finnmark. After all, their numbers were significant and significantly outweighed Norway's military presence. Yet, after an official request from Norwegian government, Soviet troops withdrew from Norway 25 September in 1955 (Skancke / University of Oslo). The Soviet withdrawal was the last to be sorted, and Norway made arrangements with US and British first. This despite concern over whether the Soviet military presence could become permanent. One can argue that the way Soviet troops conducted themselves in

Finnmark, and the fact that the Soviet in the end respected Norwegian sovereignty, was an important confidence building element in order to achieve the productive neighborly relations we have seen up recent time. It also marks an important milestone in Norway-Russia relations. Norwegians will forever be grateful for Russian troops coming to their aid during the occupation, was His Majesty King Harald V's message to the Russian delegation led by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the anniversary ceremony in Finnmark in 2014 (Horn et al., 2014). Norway's Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, was also present at the ceremony and presented her gratitude for the Russian contribution.

There are numerous examples of cooperation and bilateral agreements amongst the two states. The year 2010 was a milestone, when Norway and Russia signed the treaty concerning "Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and Arctic Ocean" and thereby resolving a crucial question in Norway-Russia relations (Norwegian Government, 2010). The parties signed the treaty 15 September 2010 following 40 years of negotiations. In short, the treaty determines the boundary between Norway and Russia in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean. The treaty also includes agreements to continue cooperation concerning fishery and exploitation of a potential hydrocarbon deposit that extends across the delimitation line (Norwegian Government, 2010). According to the Norwegian Government, the treaty contributes to legal clarity and predictability in the area. The same applies for the Incidents at Sea-Agreement, which Norway and Russia signed in 1990. The intention of the Incidents at Sea-Agreement is to avoid unwanted incidents in situations where the two parties' naval vessels and military planes operate in territory outside their borders by emphasizing clear communication, openness about intentions and predictability. The Agreement also covers Coast Guard cooperation, including search- and rescue missions.



Clarity, consistency and predictability has been, and still are, key aspects in Norway's foreign policy approach to Russia. The general Norwegian rhetoric has been to pursue close cooperation in areas that will produce productive results for both parties, such as the areas covered in the aforementioned treaty and the Incidents at Sea-Agreement. In a speech at a conference convened by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs in 2008 former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jonas Gahr Støre, stated that "neighborly relations with Russia are on a positive track" and that "these relations have practically never been as broad as they are now – yet considerable progress can still be made" (Støre, 2008). The Norwegian rhetoric in 2015 is much but unchanged. In the words of yet a former Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Børge Brende: "Norway wants the best relationship possible with Russia. We have positive experiences with reaching bilateral solutions to common challenges" (Brende, 2015). Former Norwegian Foreign Minister, Søreide Eriksen, describes this dimension of Norway-Russia relations as "cooperation where possible", and "cooperation based on mutual interests" (Søreide Eriksen, 2015).

The words of Minister Søreide Eriksen highlight another important aspect of Norway-Russia relations: in areas where there is no mutual interest, and areas where Norway and Russia's policies do not overlap. Russia is lagging behind developed Western countries in terms of respect for democracy, rule of law, human rights and civil society. These values are the bedrock of Norwegian foreign policy, and are values Norway always try to promote. Russian President Vladimir Putin has, since assuming the presidency, continued to shift power to the President's Office and thereby centralize his power. His disregard for the abovementioned values does not coincide with Norway's ideal preference of how Russia should be. Bilateral relations between Norway and Russia can therefore be challenging from a Norwegian perspective. On one

hand, a productive and good relationship with Russia is of Norway's interest, especially with regards to cooperation in the High North. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jonas Gahr Støre, stated in 2008 that "the High North is the most important strategic priority area of the Norwegian Government's foreign policy", and furthermore that "the development of Norway-Russia relations is a main priority both for our [Norway's] High North strategy and for our foreign policy in general" (Støre, 2008). However, promoting and standing up for core liberal and democratic values is a fundamental interest to Norway. Balancing these interests is a key element in Norway's foreign policy towards Russia.

Russia also suffers from vast corruption in its public sector and lack of transparency in their legal system. As of 2014, Transparency International ranks Russia as number 136/175 on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI). The CPI ranks countries based on how corrupt Transparency International perceive a country's public sector to be (Transparency International, 2014). These factors influence the degree of Norwegian engagement in Russia in terms of trade, private investment through Norwegian companies and bilateral agreements. Støre (2008) describe this as *modern risk factors*, and states that a country with these characteristics makes a difficult neighbor. Nevertheless, by being clear and consistent in their views concerning Russia's lack of respect for core democratic values, and at the same time open to the "cooperation where possible"-approach, Norway has developed a relationship with Russia based on mutual interests, cooperation and predictability. This has been the *modus operandi* in Norway's Russia-policy since the Cold War. However, what happens with Norway's Russia-policy when the dynamics in play is no longer predictable?

## Chapter 5: Norway's Russia-Policy After Crimea - A Change of Track?

In this chapter, the thesis outlines observations in Norway's foreign policy in the context of the Russian annexation of Crimea. It touches upon a range of policy areas that are important in Norway-Russia relations. The chapter is divided into three subsections, namely 1) military and security posture, 2) economic relations, and 3) bilateral relations. An attempt is made to strictly highlight policy and not engage in a discussion or analysis at this point in the thesis.

### Defense and Security Posture

This section outlines observations and occurrences in Norway's defense and security response following the actions of Russia in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine.

#### Defense spending

The Norwegian government has put an emphasis on improving and reforming Norway's military capabilities, which is illustrated by the increase in defense spending.

In their proposal for the 2015 defense budget, the Norwegian Government proposed an increase the budget by 3.4 percent, amounting to NOK 1.460 billion. Key focus areas in the 2015 defense budget were the goal of enhancing operational capabilities for the Norwegian Armed Forces to contribute to *societal security* by increasing readiness capabilities of the Air Force's helicopters at Rygge and Bardufoss (Norwegian Government, 2014). Additionally, the Norwegian Government proposed another NOK 1.034 billion to continue the process of procuring new F-35 fighter jets, which in long term will replace the outdated and worn-out F-16 fighter jets. Defense Minister Søreide described the budget good, sober and realistic when presenting it in October 2014 (Norwegian Government, 2014).

The defense budget for 2016 increased with 9.8 percent in real terms, which makes it the highest increase in the defense budget throughout history for the Norwegian Government. A key factor for behind this increase is the launch of a new long-term defense plan called “Capable and Sustainable” presented by the Norwegian government 16 June 2016 (Norwegian Ministry of Defense, 2016), which aims to renew and bolster the Norwegian military for a deteriorated and worsened security scenario in its close vicinity. The number one priority is to strengthen the national defense, through a) maintaining situational awareness and strengthen the ability to conduct crisis management operations, b) improving readiness levels, combat power and survivability, c) improving the ability to receive allied reinforcements, and d) increasing allied military presence and more frequent exercises and training (Norwegian Ministry of Defense, 2016). The second priority is to strengthen NATO’s ability for collective defense. The plan identifies Russia’s growing military capabilities and its use of force as the most significant change in the Norwegian security environment. Furthermore, the plan points to Russia’s military reform and modernization of its conventional forces and highlights repeated willingness from the Russian side to use a wide range of measures to sustain their political dominance and influence, including military force (Norwegian Ministry of Defense, 2016). While stating that Russia does not pose a military threat to Norway, the plan still considers Russia as a key factor for Norwegian defense planning. The plan also emphasizes the High North, where Russia’s military presence and activity has increased over the last years. Despite the fact that the High North and the Arctic remains a region characterized by cooperation and stability, the Norwegian Ministry of Defense is reluctant to rule out a scenario where Russia turns to military force in pursuit of their foreign interests in the region. In the closing remarks of the long-term plan, former Defense Minister Søreide Eriksen underscores that “changes to and developments in our strategic

environment over the past few years have reminded us that we cannot take our security for granted” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). It is reasonable to believe that the Defense Minister is referring to Russia’s use of military force in Ukraine. Both the Defense Minister’s statement, and the plan’s content and rationale highlighted above, should therefore be viewed to some extent as a response to the changed and worsened security scenario in Europe following Russia’s annexation of Crimea and violation of International Law.

The historic increase in the 2016 defense budget ensures continuation of the F-35 procurement process with earmarked funding. Furthermore, it continues to emphasize the strengthening of military capabilities and military presence in the High North and areas close to the Russian border through increased patrols (Norwegian Government, 2015). This includes permanently deploying an Ula-class submarine at the Ramsund Military Base in Northern Norway and upping the amount of sailing days in the High North to 250 days a year. In addition, the 2016 budget will enable the P-3C Maritime Patrol Aircraft, known as the Orion, to conduct both longer and more frequent patrols in the High North and thereby strengthening surveillance capabilities (Norwegian Government, 2015). The Intelligence Service also receives a substantial boost in funding for 2016, with NOK 250 million more in their budget post.

The defense budget for 2017 also saw an increase amounting to 4,2 percent from the previous year. A large portion of the 2017 budget was earmarked for much needed maintenance on equipment, acquisition of spare parts and building reserves. As with the two previous budgets, a considerable chunk of the budget is allocated to the F-35 procurement process. The 2017 military budget follows up on the “Capable and Sustainable” long-term plan, in which Russia plays a considerable role in terms of Norwegian defense planning.

The Norwegian government continues to increase their military budget in 2018 as well. In nominal terms, the increase amounts to 3.8 billion NOK compared to the 2017 budget. The 2018 budget should also be viewed as a continuation of the new long-term plan launched in 2016. In the Parliament proposal Prop. 1 S (2017-2018) for fiscal year 2018 the Ministry of Defense mentions Russia 54 times in the 178-page long document. It highlights that Norwegian security policy historically has been shaped by Norway's relationship with Russia, and that Russia's has caused serious uncertainty through its actions, anti-Western rhetoric and increased military activities in Norway's and NATO's close vicinity. Furthermore, it points to Russia's swift reestablishment of a modernized and powerful military and its will to use military force to pursue strategic interests and thereby violating international law (Ministry of Defense, 2017-2018). It also underscores the fact that NATO remains the cornerstone in Norway's security policy and highlights the need for Norway to carry its weight and to honor their commitment to the burden-sharing principle in NATO (Ministry of Defense, 2017-2018).

Table 1: Norway's total defense budgets from 2015-2018.

Adopted budget	2015	2016	2017	2018
Budget total (in 1000 NOK)	43 787 866	48 892 262	51 248 190	55 021 199
Percentage increase from previous fiscal year's budget	3,4 %	9,8 %	4,2 %	7,4 %

A report published by the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment from 2015 (Berg & Kvalvik, 2015) studies and describes growth in the Norwegian defense sector after WWII up to 2015. One finding is that, while defense budgets saw a reduced amounting to roughly 1 percent annually in the 1990s after the Cold War, defense budgets has increased by approximately 1,5 percent since year 2000. Compared to the annual percentage increase starting from 2015-2018 illustrated in the table above, the 1,5 percent increase in defense budgets from 2000-2015 seems rather insignificant. However, the Norwegian defense budget is still well below the NATO target of 2 % of gross domestic product (GDP). The latest numbers available from 2016, as official GDP numbers are available only 23 months after the end of the fiscal year, shows that Norway's defense spending amounted to 1,55 % of GDP (Ministry of Defense, 2017-2018). Norway does, however, allocate a substantial amount of their defense spending towards new investments and has hit NATO's 20 % investment requirement in all the above-mentioned defense budgets.

To summarize the observations above, it is clear that Norway has, since 2015 and the years after the Russian annexation of Crimea, significantly increased their defense spending. This despite decreasing GDP growth, partly, but far from exclusively, due to lower oil prices. Norway's relationship with Russia has historically been an important element in Norwegian defense planning, and Russia's increased military activity in the High North, their military reform, and their willingness to use military force as a tool of pursuing strategic interests, seem to have made Russia even more relevant in this regard. Norway's defense budgets since 2015 and the new "Capable and Sustainable"- plan clearly illustrates Norway's goals to strengthen military capabilities in terms of patrolling and monitoring in the High North, by upping readiness levels, crisis management and transatlantic cooperation. The procurement of the new F-35 fighter

jets is a significant investment in both defensive and offensive capabilities, which is highlighted in the following section.

### The F-35 Fighter Jets Procurement

In an article, the Norwegian newspaper, Klassekampen, claims to have insight in a classified government document highlighting the rationale behind the procurement of 52 new American-made F-35 fighter jets, as well as possible scenarios and missions for them to be deployed based on information stemming from the Norwegian Intelligence Service (Lyseberg & Tallaksen, 2016). The document called “Antallsanalysen” (Numbers analysis, authors translation) served as information with regards to the decision-making process, and the question of how many F-35 fighter jets the Norwegian government should procure. This document has been updated over time and adapted to the current security situation. One of three possible scenarios presented in the document is a scenario where Russian navy vessels and fighter jets have entered Norwegian territorial waters, and Norway is therefore in a full-scale war with Russia. The scenario demands deployment of the full fleet of 52 jets to attack Russian navy vessels and fighter jets in the Norwegian Sea and Barents Sea, in addition to targeting military infrastructure on the ground on Russian territory, such as antiaircraft, aircrafts and other military targets. The above is to a large extent confirmed by former Deputy Defense Minister, Øystein Bø, when asked about the contents of the document (Lyseberg & Tallaksen, 2016). The two other scenarios highlight the importance of the capability to handle different tasks simultaneously, and 12 fighter jets are to be set aside to NATO operations.

Based on the above, one can argue that a potential threat from Russia, in addition to other strategic defense and security interests, served as an important argument during the decision-making process when acquiring the new F-35 fighter jets.



## Bilateral military activities

The Norwegian Ministry of Defense informed in late March 2014, shortly after the Russia annexation of Crimea, that they suspended all planned military activities with Russia until the end of May 2014 (Ministry of Defense, 2014a). What later became apparent after renewed assessments of the situation was that the suspension would last throughout 2015. In three press releases from the Ministry of Defense (Ministry of Defense 2014a, 2014b & 2014c), the Norwegian Government informed that the suspension of all bilateral military activities would remain in place throughout 2015, starting in March 2014. In total, the suspension includes at least 19 planned bilateral visits or activities, including exercise “Northern Eagle” – a major joint naval military exercise (Ministry of Defense, 2014a).

## NATO

Norway’s NATO-membership is critical in how Norway approaches and thinks about Norway’s Russia-relations, and NATO is the backbone of Norway’s general defense strategy. Relying on NATO’s article 5 and the idea of collective security remains an integral part of Norway’s defense strategy. Former Defense Minister Søreide Eriksen highlights this in a speech at the Atlantic Council conference on the European Security Landscape, in which she states that “at the end of the day...Norway depends on NATO for our [Norway’s] security” (Søreide Eriksen, 2015). Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg also underlines the importance of NATO for Norway’s security a speech at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Stavanger, 12 October 2015, in which she said that “sixty-six years after it was established, NATO remains the bedrock of Norway’s security” (Solberg 2015). Hence, it is relevant to outline occurrences in NATO’s strategies and rhetoric following the Ukraine-conflict, as it affects the policies of the Norwegian Government and vice versa.

The NATO Summit in Wales on 4-5 September was the first instance of a major NATO-gathering after the Ukraine conflict. Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg, former Foreign Affairs Minister Børge Brende and former Defense Minister Ine Eriksen Søreide all participated. In short, NATO agreed to a “Readiness Action Plan”, with the goal to enhance NATO’s preparedness and responsiveness, including its posture (Government of the United Kingdom 2014). The backdrop for this policy paper is the “serious crises which affect security and stability to NATO’s east and south...[and] include Russia’s illegal self-declared “annexation” of Crimea and Russia’s continued aggressive acts in other parts of Ukraine” (Government of the United Kingdom 2014). In the Wales Summit Declaration NATO also decided to establish a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), which is “a new allied force the will be able to deploy within a few days to respond to challenges that arise, particularly at the periphery of NATO’s territory” (Wales Summit Declaration 2014). According to former Defense Minister Søreide, who signed the agreement during the summit, the VJTF is an effort to make NATO more relevant and better suited to confront a new security situation (Søreide Eriksen, 2014). The Defense Minister also underscores that although Norway will provide forces to the VJTF, and that the creation of the force remains independent of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea. (Søreide Eriksen, 2014).

In the aforementioned speech at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in 2015, Prime Minister Solberg points to the fact that Russian military modernization and greater complexity in flights- and naval operations in the High North forces Norway to think differently in terms of security. Prime Minister Solberg does not, however, consider Russia to be a direct threat to Norway or Norwegian interests, which is in accordance with NATO’s views.

According to both Prime Minister Solberg and former Defense Minister Søreide, sea lines of communication in the North Atlantic appears to be a pressing issue for NATO and an issue Norway wants to bring to NATO's attention. The potential for an anti-access challenge in the North-Atlantic, because of Russian armament in the High North, was former Defense Minister Søreide Eriksen's key point in her speech at the Atlantic Council in 2015 (Søreide, 2015). In her speech at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in October 2015, Prime Minister Solberg called for increased focus and awareness from NATO's side on the same issue, as sea denial will seriously hamper NATO's ability to protect its allies. It is not farfetched to assume that Prime Minister Solberg had Norway in mind when saying so.

NATO has agreed to a Norwegian offer to host a major, high-visibility exercise in the alliance's northernmost area in 2018 (Norwegian Government 2015). According to former Defense Minister Søreide "we envisage a training scenario where the focus is on demonstrating deterrence and defense of this area of the alliance" (Norwegian Government 2015). Approximately 25.000 soldiers will participate in the exercise.

To summarize the above, we see that the Norwegian Government calls for more attention from NATO to the developing situation in the Arctic Sea and the High North because of Russian military- modernization and mobilization. The Norwegian government see this potentially leading to sea denial and closed sea lines of communication, which would hurt NATO's ability to help its allies. Norway will participate in – and provide military personnel to - the newly established VJTF and will be the host for a major NATO military exercise in 2018. While NATO and Norway do not see a direct military threat from Russia, the abovementioned actions and recommendations do stem from a changed security scenario where Russia's annexation of Crimea and aggressions in Eastern Ukraine play a big role.

Even though the following does not directly concern NATO, it is important to include the following observation as Norway. In 2017, the Norwegian government decided to welcome 330 American soldiers to Værnes military base in mid-Norway. An agreement was made with the Norwegian government and American authorities, which allows the US soldiers to train and exercise in Norway on a rotational basis. The duration of the deal was later extended to 2018 later that year. The decision by the Norwegian government was warmly welcomed by US authorities and the US Marine Corps, who was behind the initiative, but the decision also lacked broad political support in Norway and was criticized by some parties in the Storting (the Norwegian Parliament). The question was raised on whether this would lead to a permanent US military base in Norway, which would be a breach of domestic law in Norway which states that no foreign power is allowed to establish a military base on Norwegian soil.

The decision to welcome American soldiers to train and exercise in Norway raised concern in Russia, who argues that it raises tension in High North according to Norwegian newspaper Dagens Næringsliv (2018). It did not help to cool down the Russian narrative when US Gen. Robert Neller during a visit to Værnes stated that “I hope I am wrong, but there is a war is coming... You are in a fight here, and informational fight, a political fight, by your presence”. Gen. Neller went on to say “Remember why you are here. They are watching. Just like you watch them. We have got 300 Marines up here; we could go from 300 to 3,000 overnight. We could raise the bar” (Seck, 2017).

Norwegian newspaper Klassekampen revealed 7 October 2017 that the US Marines in internal documents have referred to the deployment to Værnes as permanent, and that the goal is to establish a permanent base with rotational deployments. The aforementioned document also included construction plans for the base. Klassekampen also refers to sources from within the

Norwegian government and military stating that “the agreement concerning ration-based training by US soldiers is de facto a permanent military base” (Tallaksen & Lysberg, 2017). The Norwegian government has categorically denied that the deal involves a permanent base, but evidence says otherwise.

## Economic Relations

### Sanctions

According to Forrer (2017), the most typical uses of economic sanctions to achieve foreign policy goals include:

- 1) *Compelling another country to change unwanted policies by inflicting a level of economic suffering for a sufficient duration of time to make retaining the offending policy, including regime change, intolerable.*
- 2) *Deterring another country from adopting an unwanted policy in the future by inflicting a level of economic suffering for action(s) already taken commensurate with the grievousness of the action.*
- 3) *Denying another country and others access to resources and financing that would be used to advance an unwanted policy or practice.*
- 4) *Denying another country access to financial assets that could otherwise be used as reparations for actions of the sanctioned countries.*
- 5) *Make a symbolic gesture to diplomatically isolate the sanctioned country but with no expectations that the economic sanctions will impact the unwanted policies.*

The Norway Government decided to impose sanctions on trade and commerce with Russia 15 August 2014, and to sharpen these sanctions 10 October the same year. The Norwegian sanctions are in accordance with the sanctions imposed by the European Union on 31 July and 12 September. The sanctions are regulated through a provision of law titled “Provision of law concerning actions that undermine or threatens the territorial integrity, sovereignty, independence and stability of Ukraine” (Forskrift om tiltak vedr. Ukrainas integritet mv. 2014, authors translation). The sanctions include financial sanctions, banning import of goods from Crimea or Sevastopol, a weapon embargo and restrictions for Russian oil industry (Norwegian Government 2015). Former Foreign Minister Børge Brende, underscored in October 2014 that the sanctions are a direct response to Russia’s actions in Ukraine and their violation of International Law (Norwegian Government, 2017). Prime Minister Erna Solberg highlighted the need to act in a coordinated manner for the sanctions to be as effective as possible, when explaining the rationale behind signing on to the EU sanctions in 2014 (Sælebakke, 2014).

Shortly after the EU, USA and Norway and more put into action their sanctions directed at Russia, Russian President Vladimir Putin countered by imposing import sanctions on western food and agricultural products. Russia is Europe’s second-largest market for food and drink (Walker & Rankin, 2014). The Russian sanctions covers EUs 28 countries, USA, Norway, Canada and Australia. A graph from the British newspaper, The Daily Telegraph, illustrates that Norway is the country affected the most by the sanctions. For Norway, the value of sanctioned imports in Russia amounts to \$1,158m (The Daily Telegraph, 2013). Bukkvoll, a researcher at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, underscores that Russia’s relations to Norway is a mere trifle in this regard, and that Russia views the West as one entity in this regard (Aale, 2014).

The case of the Russian annexation of Crimea is not the first time Norway comes together with the EU on foreign policy issue. The Norwegian government monitors closely the EU's common foreign policy, and in 2014 Norway signed on to 94 percent of the EU's measures and declarations to which they were invited support (Danielsen, 2015). While the annexation of Ukraine remained on top of the agenda, Norway also supported measures concerning Libya, Syria and Venezuela in addition to supporting declarations condemning human rights violations in Iran, Uganda and Pakistan for instance.

Norway's sanctions against Russia will be revisited and discussed further in chapter 5, when analyzing Norway's policy response.

## Bilateral Relations

### Bilateral cooperation

After examining numerous newspaper articles press releases from the Norwegian Government, it becomes apparent that the Norwegian Government and Ministers on multiple occasions applies rhetoric that condemn Russia's actions in Ukraine, but also highlight the need for sustained cooperation and dialogue. The aforementioned rhetoric includes condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine and disregard for International Law, but it also includes the idea of separating Russia's critique-worthy political discourse from the pragmatic and practical cooperation Norway and Russia has developed over time. Some examples of this type of rhetoric follows.

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Børge Brende, explains in an article published in April 2015 that "Norway wants good and close relations to Russia, based on mutual interests and respect for fundamental international law" (Brende 2015, authors translation). Brende continues,

“Russia remains our neighbor despite the political situation. We therefore chose to continue our cooperation with Russia in many areas...However, it is not the appropriate time to return to a normal bilateral relationship” (Brende 2015, authors translation). Brende used similar rhetoric in his introduction speech at a meeting concerning Norway’s future foreign- and security policy convened by the Norwegian MFA in early 2016, in which Russia was a natural talking point. Brende stated “there is no contradiction in safeguarding our own [Norway’s] bilateral interests with Russia and at the same time, in accordance with allies and partners, promote international law and defend important principals” (Brende 2016, authors translation). In the same speech, Brende also mentions that practical cooperation and constructive dialog continues to characterize Norway’s relations with Russia, and points to the successful resolve of the refugee crisis with thousands of migrants crossing Norway and Russia’s shared border in the north.

In three press releases from the Ministry of Defense from 2014, mainly dealing with the suspension of bilateral military activities, the Norwegian Government also highlights the importance of retaining bilateral cooperation with Russia. This includes collaboration on Coast Guard, Border Guard, and search- and rescue activities, maritime safety, as well as the workings of the Incidents at Sea Agreement (Ministry of Defense 2014a, 2014b, 2014c). In an interview with CNN International, Defense Minister Søreide underscores that “we [the West] are faced with a different Russia... that does not mean that we will not [cooperate] with Russia. Norway has for decades [had] both practical and pragmatic cooperation [with Russia], and we still have a lot of it” (Søreide 2015).

But events have occurred after the Russian annexation of Crimea that worsened Norway-Russia relations. Russian Deputy Prime Minister, Dmitrij Rogozin’s, unannounced visit to Svalbard, a Norwegian archipelago in the Arctic Ocean, 19 April 2015 caused great distress in



Norway-Russia relations. Russian President Putin has put Rogozin in charge of the developments in the High North, and he is described as an aggressive and nationalistic Russian politician who openly supported the annexation of Crimea (Jentoft, 2015). As a result of the EU's and Norway's sanctions towards Russia, Rogozin is a persona non grata in Norway and was not allowed to set foot on Norwegian soil. During his short visit to Svalbard, Rogozin underscored the importance of increased Russian presence in the Arctic and that we (Russia) will make the Arctic ours, according to Jentoft (2015). In addition, Rogozin mocked the Norwegian government on the microblog Twitter, and claimed that he was legally entitled to visit Svalbard as a co-signer to the Svalbard Treaty despite Svalbard being Norwegian territory (Jentoft, 2015). As a response, former Norwegian Foreign Affairs Minister ended up strengthening the sanctions by highlighting that they were also relevant for Svalbard.

2017 was a significant year in Norway-Russia relations when attempts to some extent normalize bilateral relation failed. The Storting's (Norwegian parliament) Foreign and Defense Committee long-time planned visit to Moscow was cancelled suddenly, as two members of the committee apparently turned out to be on a persona non grata-list. The remaining members of the committee therefore decided to cancel the visit as well. Members of the Norwegian government hoped that the committee's visit could be the start of more normalized relations with Russia. According to Jentoft (2017), the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was alerted by Russian authorities about persona non grata-list in November 2016, and furthermore that the Russian list likely is a direct response to EUs and Norway's similar list of personas non grata and the reactions to the Svalbard incident mentioned above. Jentoft explains that the Norwegian Foreign Ministry did not want to alert the public and press about the list of banned Norwegians and made

attempts to strike a compromise with Russia while the planning for the committee's visit was underway (Jentoft, 2017). The attempts were unsuccessful.

### “The Migration Crisis”

During the fall of 2015 Norway experienced an unexpected flow of 5500 migrants, using bicycles as means of transportation, crossing the Norwegian border patrol at Storskog in the northernmost part of the country. Two research fellows at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute examines in an article from 2016 whether the sudden flow of migrants crossing Norway's boarder through Russia was a result of deliberate Russian policy in order to destabilize Norway. Some observers, amongst them Stormark (2015), presents the idea that flow of migrants was a result Russian hybrid warfare, and that Russia channeled the migrants to the Norwegian boarder. Supposedly, Norway was given during a regular meeting between Norwegian and Russian security personnel an indirect warning about 15 000 non-Russian citizens finding themselves in Murmansk county close to Norway. Stormark (2015) also presents the idea that the Russian Intelligence Service (FSB) marketed the so called “Arctic route” through social media and sold bicycles to the migrants, given the fact that you are not allowed to cross the border by foot. Another important element is why so few migrants decided to migrate to Finland, who with Russia shares a border that stretches significantly longer compared to the border shared by Norway and Russia. This question was also brought up by Norwegian government officials in the Norwegian Foreign Ministry according Stormark (2015). In addition, a reprisal for Norwegian imposed sanctions on Russia is also mentioned as a possible motive for Russia to deliberately channel migrants to Norway (Moe & Roe, 2016).

It was on the basis of the abovementioned allegations that, Moe & Roe (2016), sought to bring answers to the table. They argue that the Russian border practices was not altered in any

significant way in 2015, and that Norway had a wrong impression of the Russian border regime being more restrictive than what it really was. The most plausible explanation for the sudden flow of migrants is according to Moe & Roe (2015) is the self-interest of migrants who happened to find a cheaper and less risky route.

The case of the migrants in Storskog is interesting and relevant for at least two reasons.

1) Timing. The incident occurred relatively shortly (well over a year) after the Russian annexation of Crimea, which led to a worsened security scenario in Europe and a worsened relationship between Norway and Russia. 2) The changed nature of Norway-Russia relations due to the incidents in Ukraine: Norway had at this point condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine, imposed sanctions, and political and diplomatic contact was reduced. This was a sensitive case due to the dynamics in play, which potentially could further damage Norway-Russia relations if not dealt with in a precise manner.

Norway's approach in handling this case has come under scrutiny. Rowe (2017) is one of the critics. He questions the fact that a case that in broad terms dealt with Norway-Russia relations at a sensitive time was handled by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Migration Department, while skilled diplomats and the Foreign Ministry was sidelined. In a similar manner, asylum-seekers were sent back and forth the Norwegian-Russian border. The Norwegian government returned migrants with one-time visas to Russia and ignored Russia's clear message that they would not be accepted and hence returned to Norway again. According to Rowe (2017) this fostered increased distrust between the two parties. The fact that the Norwegian Government in September 2016 decided to build a 200-meter long and 3-meter high fence at the cost of NOK 4 million along the border only manifested the Russian narrative of

western isolation from Russia and became a materialistic symbol of Norway's distrust towards Russia (Rowe, 2017)

## Chapter 6: Analysis

### Explaining Norway's response to Russia's actions in Ukraine

The introductory section of this research established that, from the end of the Cold War until 2014, the bilateral dimension of Norway-Russia relations dominated Norway's foreign policy approach towards Russia. It was a time influenced by a desire from the Norwegian government to engage with Russia on multiple policy areas, such as the High North, military cooperation, trade and commerce and channels of communications were open and constructive. Norwegian government officials promoted the notion of "cooperation where possible", pragmatism and a genuine desire to cooperate closely with its neighbors in the north. This culminated in major break-throughs such as the Incidents at Sea-treaty and the treaty on "Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and Arctic Ocean", thereby solving a long-standing dispute in Norway-Russia relations. As previously mentioned, former Foreign Affairs Minister Støre said in 2008 that "these relations have practically never been as broad as they are now – yet considerable progress can still be made". This despite Russian constraints on liberal values, such as freedom of press, human rights and transparency in politics, which are important elements in Norwegian domestic and foreign policy.

Chapter 4 highlights new occurrences in Norway's foreign policy that will now be tested against the thesis' hypothesis, which argues that *Norway's Russia-policy has since the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula shifted from a liberal approach to a more realist foreign*

*policy doctrine*. It makes sense to go through each of the three sections outlined in chapter 4 separately before reaching a conclusion. Each section includes explanations of how realist and liberal international relations theory would explain state behavior within that policy within the given policy area.

### Defense and Security Structure

The observations outlined in this research show that Norway spends more money on military and defense after the Russian annexation of Crimea. After examining Norway's defense budgets from year 2000 until this day it clear that the Norwegian government significantly increased defense budgets starting with the 2015 defense budget, which was the first fiscal year after the Russian annexation of Crimea. After 2015, Norway continued to further increase defense spending up to 2018. The average 1,5% increase in defense spending from 2000-2014 is significantly lower compared to the numbers shown in table 1. We also know that a substantial chunk of the defense budgets from 2015-2016 has been earmarked for the procurement of 56 new F-35 fighter jets. A section has been devoted to discussing the F-35 procurement process and highlighting scenarios, described in a classified document, in which the new fighter jets are put to use. Norway is in a full-scale war with Russia in one of the scenarios and the entire fleet of fighter jets are deployed to attack Russian targets. Based on the above, one can argue that a potential threat from Russia, in addition to other strategic defense and security interests, served as an important argument during the decision-making process when acquiring the new F-35 fighter jets. Structural realist IR theory are able to predict Norway's increased defense spending, investments and focus on strengthening military capabilities, as they are measures of balancing a potential Russian threat and increasing deterrence.

Another interesting element supporting the thesis's hypothesis, is the influence the price of oil and threat perception have on defense spending. Both Norway's and Russia's economies rely heavily on production and export of oil and gas, and the sudden drop in oil prices in late 2014 naturally affected the two countries economy to some extent. It is logical to assume that both oil prices and threat perception influence defense spending in oil and gas-exporting countries. Berg and Kvalvik (2015) discusses the effect of oil prices and threat perception on projected defense spending for both Russia and Norway in the abovementioned report. In Norway, the period of 2014-2020, Berg and Kvalvik (2015) project that factors such as lower oil prices, demography and decreasing productivity levels will lead to an annual growth in GDP below 2,6%, which has been the average figure the last 40 years. Petroleum will no longer be such an important factor for growth in the Norwegian economy in the future, and contributions from the Norwegian Pension Fund to the national budget will decrease as a consequence. GDP growth, in real terms, is therefore expected to average 2,4% from 2015-2030, and 1,6% in 2030-2060. It is also important to not under-communicate factors such as demography and macroeconomic trends in this regard. In other words, Norway is currently in a period where GDP growth is decreasing (Berg & Kvalvik, 2015). Why is Norway's decreasing GDP growth relevant for this thesis? Decreasing GDP growth is relevant when discussed in the context of increased defense spending. The fact that defense spending increases in a period with decreasing GDP growth underscores the emphasis the Norwegian government currently put on defense and military capabilities, which in turn speaks to Norway's threat perception of Russia.

Russia is currently investing heavily in its military and find itself in the middle of a major military reform titled GPV-2027 State Arms Program worth more than 330 billion USD (Luzin, 2018). There is however reasonable doubt concerning whether Russia will be able to fund this

mammoth of a weapons program, especially due to the fall in oil prices and the economic sanction imposed by the west including Norway, which has hurt Russia's economy (Berg and Kvalvik, 2015). As of 2015, Russia was already spending 4% of GDP on defense and military, and the figure increased to 5,4% in 2016 (The World Bank, 2018). There is definitely a will in Russia to invest in defense and military, and according to Berg & Kvalvik (2015) this will probably raise Norway's attention and desire to allocate money for defense purposes on the expense of other budget posts. Structural realism would predict this as military and defense measures is the highest prioritized issue in international relations.

On the other hand, the Norwegian defense budgets are still well below the NATO target of 2 % of GDP. The latest numbers available from 2016, as official GDP numbers are available only 23 months after the end of the fiscal year, shows that Norway's defense spending amounted to 1,55 % of GDP (Ministry of Defense, 2017-2018). This illustrates that Norway does not spend money on defense at the expense of other priorities, which is not what structural realism would predict as strengthening defense and military capabilities is not prioritized in an obvious manner.

NATO has multiple times been described as the bedrock in Norway's defense and security strategy in this research. This is supported by Larsen (2018) who explains that Norway's security and defense policy has over several decades depended on three pillars:

- 1) That global security is secured through an institutionalized world order with the UN Charter and the UN Security Council as the highest-ranking organ.
- 2) The US as our main allied and guarantor for security.
- 3) NATO as an anchor for the defense of Norway and Norwegian sovereignty.

The second and third pillar are tightly connected as the US is the largest contributor to NATO and with its nuclear arsenal constitute the most important element of deterrence.

After the Russian annexation of Crimea, the Norwegian government and government officials has at numerous occasions, including the NATO summit in Wales, reminded its allies and those listening that NATO is of utmost important to Norway. One can argue that this is a way of reassuring allies in NATO, and also reminding Russia, of their commitment to NATO and security cooperation. Some examples of Norway's commitment are co-signing the Readiness Action Plan and hosting a major NATO military exercise in 2018. Norway also contributes to the establishment of the VJTF, which is meant to be deployed rapidly to NATO's periphery especially. Norway (including the High North) is NATO in the north, and Norway has naturally attempted to increasingly shift NATO's attention to the High North after Crimea by pointing to a potential anti-access threat in the case of Russian aggression. This may be viewed as an attempt to set the NATO's agenda in Norway's favor. In an unprecedented manner, depending on if one considers the US Marines establishment on Værnes military base to be permanent or not, Norway agreed to host foreign soldiers on Norwegian soil over a long period of time. This despite the unanswered question on whether the agreement is in violation of Norwegian law and resistance from some political parties in the Norwegian parliament. Regardless, there seem to be contradicting views within Norway, and between the Norwegian government and US Marines, on whether the arrangement is permanent or not. But the fact that Norway has suspended all bilateral military activities and cooperation with Russia, and instead sought closer cooperation with the US as its closest allied, remains indisputable. All of the abovementioned factors point in the direction that Norway is strengthening and reassuring military alliances and upping deterrence measures as an instrument to counter a potential Russian threat, which is a behavior in line with what structural realism would predict.



To conclude this section on security and defense posture, it is apparent that most of the elements discussed in this section speak in favor of the hypothesis of this research. There seem to be a shift in policy from wanting to engage with Russia in bilateral military activity with Russia to seizing these activities and instead increase focus on strengthening military capabilities and defense alliances, which is in line with what structural realism predicts.

### Economic Relations

Norway has since the Russian annexation of Crimea imposed sanctions on Russia, in line with likeminded states in the EU as well as the US. According to Forrer (2017), the most typical uses of economic sanctions to achieve foreign policy goals include:

- 1) *Compelling another country to change unwanted policies by inflicting a level of economic suffering for a sufficient duration of time to make retaining the offending policy, including regime change, intolerable.*
- 2) *Deterring another country from adopting an unwanted policy in the future by inflicting a level of economic suffering for action(s) already taken commensurate with the grievousness of the action.*
- 3) *Denying another country and others access to resources and financing that would be used to advance an unwanted policy or practice.*
- 4) *Denying another country access to financial assets that could otherwise be used as reparations for actions of the sanctioned countries.*
- 5) *Make a symbolic gesture to diplomatically isolate the sanctioned country but with no expectations that the economic sanctions will impact the unwanted policies.*

The first and third uses of economic sanctions in Forrer's (2017) list is highly applicable in the case of Norway's response to Russia's behavior in Ukraine. Norway's ultimate goal by imposing

sanctions on Russia is naturally to compel Russia to return Crimea to its rightful owners and adhere to International Law. Another goal is to hinder Russia to access resources and financing that would be used to further their super power ambitions. Returning to the realist assumption that military and economic power constitute the main instruments of power in international relations, structural realism is able to explain that imposing sanctions on Russia is a way of decreasing Russian economic and military power. The logic is quite straight-forward: By imposing signing on to a multilateral sanctions regime against Russia, Norway is takes part in inflicting economic suffering on Russia. How effective, and how much suffering these sanctions inflict, is unclear and perhaps a question for another research project. Nevertheless, it is reasonable that the western sanctions regime imposed on Russia, in addition to sinking oil prices, to some extent hampers Russia's economy, and thereby disrupts Russia's ability to complete its military build-up. Russia is currently, as previously explained, investing heavily in a major military reform amounting to the cost of 330 billion USD at the expense of other investments. The previous section also highlighted that Russia uses an increasing amount of GDP on military and defense – an amount that may increase if Russia insists on maintaining the military build-up while the economy suffers.

It has also been established that Russia's counter sanctions on food and agricultural products against Norway inflict some level of economic suffering on Norway, mostly due to the fact that the Russian market makes a considerable part of Norway's total export market for seafood. To compensate, Norway has found other markets for its export of seafood such as the Belarusian where exports have tripled after the Russian sanctions (Rørstad, 2014). While the Russian sanctions are far from ideal for Norway, they do not seem to impose a very significant

level of economic suffering. Nevertheless, this tit for tat behavior from Norway-Russia is something structural realism would predict as a measure of balancing power.

To conclude this section, it undisputable that imposing economic sanctions on Russia marks a shift in Norway's Russia-policy. Imposing sanctions to inflict economic suffering, and thereby hindering Russia in its military build-up can be predicted by structural realism.

### Bilateral Relations

Previous sections have highlighted through quotes, statements and policies that the pragmatic and practical cooperation that, to large extent, defines the bilateral dimension of Norway-Russia relations continues despite the events in Ukraine. In the aftermath of Crimea, Norway decided to retain cooperation with Russia in some areas, such as coast guard, border guard, search-and-rescue activities and the workings of the Incident at Sea-treaty. In addition, Norway has retained contact between the Norwegian Joint Headquarter and the Russian Northern Fleet. Political leaders in Norway attended the commemoration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of liberation of Finnmark during WWII and celebrated the historical Norwegian-Russian cooperation. Despite some tension on the Storskog border and alleged Russian attempts to destabilize Norway, the two parties still managed to solve the crisis in a somewhat calm matter. This underscores the idea of separating bilateral cooperation from the political situation and a changed security scenario. We know that complex interdependence theory predicts states to prefer soft power and diplomacy over military measures as the cost of a potential war is too big. States would therefore turn to reassurance measures, confidence-building and diplomacy either bilateral or through international organizations. The above examples of retaining cooperation can be viewed as attempts reassurance measures.

On the other side, the Russian “aggression” in Svalbard as a symbolic protest against Norwegian policy and the refusal to allow Norwegian parliamentarians to conduct a political visit to Moscow shows that the status bilateral relations are far from normalized and on the contrary on an all-time low. Therefore, one can argue that little emphasis has been put on bilateral cooperation and confidence-building measures compared to defense and security and economic relations. This argument speaks in favor of the hypothesis of the research, namely that Norway’s Russia-policy has shifted towards a more realist policy doctrine. Complex interdependence theory would not predict this type of behavior from Norway.

To conclude this section, there are still elements of cooperation and confidence-building in Norway’s Russia-policy after Crimea which complex interdependence can predict as a way of avoiding a military confrontation. However, these elements were more apparent in Norway’s Russia-policy prior to Crimea as illustrated in this research. Therefore, the lack of emphasis on these measures compared to defense and security speaks in favor of a shift in Norway’s Russia-policy shifting towards a more realist policy doctrine.

## Chapter 7: What Have We Learned and the Road Ahead

This research conclude that Norway has, in the aftermath of the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, conducted a foreign policy towards Russia that can be predicted and explained by the realist school in IR theory. To reach this conclusion, the research highlights Norway’s Russia-policy prior the Russian annexation of Crimea and illustrate that the modus operandi in Norway’s Russia-policy up to that point was predominately shaped by the bilateral dimension, which encourage tighter cooperation and strengthening bilateral relations. By outlining relevant policy areas in Norway’s Russia-policy, after the Russia’s annexation of

Crimea and a changed security scenario in Europe, the thesis illustrates that there has been a shift in Norway's Russia-policy. Finally, these observations are analyzed and explained through the lens of IR theory. On the basis of the above, the thesis conclude that Norway's Russia-policy after Crimea is predominately realist-oriented, but efforts are still made to maintain somewhat normalized bilateral relations which can be explain by neoliberal IR theory.

Norway-Russia relations are at an all-time low due to Russia's disregard for International Law and annexation of Crimea. There is a cold front between the west, including Norway, and Russia. It is a developing and dynamic situation that should be monitored further and given continued academic attention. Future research should test the findings in this research, and further inquiry into the effects of the shift in Norwegian policy. As Russia continues its military build-up, the already apparent asymmetric nature of Norway-Russia relations in terms of power will continue to increase. This may lead to a growing threat perception from the Norway's side, which can and probably will affect future policy-making.

Norway and the west deem the Russian annexation of Crimea as an attempt to increase its power and sphere of influence – a step forward in their ambitions of becoming a super power. On the contrary, Russia believe that they have a rightful claim to Crimea and that western expansionism into Russia's strategic areas forced them to take action. Norway and the west want to see Russia return Crimea to Ukraine and act in a manner according to International Law and a western standard of norms and values. It has become clear that Russia does not share the emphasis on these norms and values, and that Russia and the west are on a collision course. For Norway, this means that the importance of Norway-Russia relations is more important than ever as Norway's and Russia's strategic national interests are mutually overlapping in the High North. Will Russia in the future, with its superior military capabilities, be willing to cooperate with

Norway in the High North? Will they adhere to bi- and multilateral frameworks for cooperation?  
Will they share slowly unveiling resources in the Arctic? And will they be a reliable partner in  
the time to come?

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